

REALISATION OF ETHICS IN THE ACTIVITY OF A SOCIAL WORKER

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Abstract

The article presents the results of the research in the realisation of ethics in social work activities. Social work is a complex and multifaceted profession in which practice is based on strong values. Social work values and ethical principles have been a particularly acute and debatable topic since ancient times. It has always been noticed that social work practical activities raise ethical issues and dilemmas. Ethical problems and their solutions are basic problems in the development of social work as a profession. Due to these reasons, the main aim of this article was set: to reveal how ethics are implemented by social workers in practice. Quantitative and qualitative research methods were used. The results revealed that social workers knew the ethical standards of their profession and implemented them in all the mentioned aspects of ethical codes. Social workers identified five main reasons which cause violations of ethical standards in their practice: apathy of colleagues, heavy workload, and lack of offices, problematic clients and nervous tension at work.

Keywords: *ethical standards, ethical problem, social work, social work ethics, social worker.*

Introduction

Social work ethics and their implementation in professional activity are rarely analysed in scientific publications. Lithuanian scientists (Vyšniauskienė & Minkutė, 2008; Ivanauskienė & Varžinskienė, 2007; Kavaliauskienė, 2005) in higher education explored the expression of ethics in the activity of social workers and teachers, investigated the expression of professional values. However, no scientific study has been found that is concerned with social workers working with the population characterised by the diversity of nationalities and religions and living in the multicultural territorial community in Lithuania overburdened with extensive social problems.

There are some discussions whether social workers observe the code of ethics; some authors reveals that social workers frequently do not observe the requirements presented in the code of ethics and make instant decisions seeking to achieve immediate results, which is often demanded by the current situation of a client. Therefore, ethical problems frequently arise in social work (Congress & McAuliffe, 2006).

The current article poses the following questions: 1) What ethical problems arise in social work? 2) What reasons determine ethical problems and their solution? 3) How are ethics implemented in the activity of a social worker? Pursuing to highlight the raised problems, the conception of a social worker's ethics and ethical dilemmas that occur in this professional activity are analysed. The conducted empirical research has highlighted the experience and attitudes of a social worker in implementing social work ethics.

The aim is to reveal how ethics are implemented in the activity of social workers and **objective** is to investigate empirically how ethics are implemented in the practical activity of social workers in Vilnius region municipality.

Theoretical validation of the realisation of ethics in different activity fields of a social worker

Social work affects the society; however, it is undeniable that the environment is also an important factor influencing social work (Gualthérie van Weezel et al., 2010). Social work is a complex profession. Therefore, different codes of social work ethics emphasise that a social worker has different ethical responsibilities in the macro, micro and mezzo spheres. The macro level includes the duties and responsibilities of a social worker in regard to the state and the society.

In 2008, the National Association of Social Workers updated the "Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers" and distinguished the social responsibilities of a social worker. **The development of social cooperation** is also a significant sphere of a social worker's activity. Social workers facilitate social participation in formation of social policy and institutional information. It is social workers that should focus on social needs when modelling social policy. The main duty of a social worker is to promote the active participation of clients in social activity despite its effect on the solution of own problems. Both social workers and their clients are more or less characterised by social activeness. Reamer (2013) maintains that ethical duties of a social worker are not limited to clients, colleagues or the society. These responsibilities also embrace **social work as a profession**. The growth of social work as a profession is directly dependent on the opinion that clients and the state hold about it. The duty of a social worker to the profession demands the realisation of his/her human potential in the society, as well as the consolidation of social work as an essential social institution with high social prestige and significance.

According to Vyšniauskienė and Minkutė (2008), a social worker implements professional functions in an organisation rendering social support. Considering responsibilities and duties of a social worker to colleagues, Reamer (2013) maintains that respect, confidentiality, skills of conflict resolution, as well as the employment of ethical principles in interdisciplinary cooperation are most important.

Summing up the first part of the article, it is possible to state that social work focuses on the coherence between a person and the society, taking care of a person's social welfare and changes in the society. Professional social work is a complex process that is created in the conditions of intensively changing environment created by social workers and their clients (Kiaunytė & Ruškus, 2010). Pursuing to competently accomplish own professional activity, a social worker should implement own duties and responsibilities in all the four spheres, i.e. responsibility against the state and society, responsibility against the profession and colleagues, responsibility against a client and his/her relatives, as well as responsibility against oneself.

If a social worker inappropriately accomplishes own duties in at least one of the spheres, the whole process of social work will be inhibited.

Presentation of research results on the realisation of ethics in the activity of a social worker

Research methodology

Research methods and instrument. Seeking to discover how ethics are implemented in the practical activity of a social worker, the quantitative research methods – questionnaire survey of a mixed type – was chosen. The questionnaire was designed on the basis of the analysis of scientific literature and analysis of the documents. It consisted of 16 open-ended and closed-ended questions. The questions were grouped in accordance with the analysed topics determined by the norms and values of social work ethics. The data were processed using SPSS programme. Frequencies (percentage) were applied to calculate the data. Pearson's chi-square criterion χ^2 , Spearman's correlation were applied in order to determine the differences of the obtained results in different socio-demographic groups of respondents. The qualitative research method presented using the method of content analysis.

The description of codes of ethics for social workers presupposes that the duties and responsibilities of a social worker to him/herself are manifested through: creative accomplishment of own professional duties; constant professional and moral development; maintenance of professional credit and dignity and acquisition of authority in the society.

Summing up it could be noted that professional social work is a complex process that is created in the conditions of intensively changing environment created by social workers and their clients (Kiaunytė & Ruškus, 2010).

Research sample. The empirical research was conducted in a highly conducive environment: social workers and their clients of District Municipality that is characterised by multicultural and religious diversity. 59 social workers participated in the research; the majority of them (98%) were females, dominating age was 31-45 (44,1%) and 45-60 (28,8%); whereas in terms of education, the prevailing ones had higher university education in social work (37,3%) and higher education unrelated to social work (32,2%). According to working experience, a great part of the respondents had 6-10 years of working experience (44,1%) and 1-5 years of working experience (35,6%). **Ethics of research.** All the participants of the research took part on a voluntary basis. Every respondent was introduced with the research aims and procedure in the introduction of the questionnaire. There was an agreement made with the respondents that the municipality they work in would not be specified.

Presentation of research results on the realisation of ethics in the activity of a social worker

Observance of ethical obligations of a social worker to the society. The statement that the social workers mostly agreed with was that every human being is unique and deserves appreciation and respect (62,7% totally agreed, and 28,8% agreed); whereas the statement that social workers respect basic human rights referring to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was marked as 'totally agree' by 59,3% and 'agree' by 37,3%. 55,9% totally agreed and 42,4% agreed with the statement that social workers work with their clients for their own sake without harming others; 54,2% of the respondents totally agreed and 27,1% agreed that they considered the principles of social justice in their social work.

The social workers were reluctant to agree to the fact that there is considerable indifference, dishonesty and abuse of the official position in the institutions of social care and ward ship (25,4% disagreed, and 35,6% partly agreed); 37,3% of the respondents disagreed and 37,3% partly agreed to the statement that social work is incompatible with the direct and indirect support for individuals, political forces or governmental bodies that turn to terrorism and abuse to achieve their goals. The greater part of the research participants agreed that social workers keep to the principles of personal immunity, confidentiality and non-proliferation of client information (54,2% agreed). The statement that social workers accomplish only ethically valid acts and observe the standards of international ethics received inconsistent answers (23,7% disagreed, 35,6% partly agreed, and 23,7% agreed), which pointed out to ethical dilemmas in the practice of social work.

Spearman's correlation coefficients between the attitudes towards the society and socio-demographic characteristics of the social workers were analysed. Having assessed the statistically significant correlation coefficients ($p < 0,05$), it was determined that:

- 1) The social workers that had no education in social work agreed more frequently to the opinions that every human being is unique, deserves appreciation and respect; that social workers should apply own knowledge and skills in rendering support to persons, groups and communities in solving conflicts between a person and the society (statistically significant differences were identified);
- 2) Statistically significant differences were determined in the agreement of the social workers having education in social work to the statement that social work is incompatible with the direct and indirect support for individuals, political forces or governmental bodies that turn to terrorism, abuse and the like to achieve their goals;
- 3) Statistically significant differences were found in the agreement of younger social workers to the statement that social workers perform only ethically valid acts and observe the standards of international ethics;
- 4) Statistically significant differences were identified in the agreement of older social workers to the statement that there is considerable indifference, dishonesty and abuse of the official position in the institutions of social care and wardship.

Evaluation of the relationship of a social worker with his/her profession. The presented data show that the social workers have evaluated the statements about their work. The respondents mostly agreed with the statements that accomplishing their activity they succeeded in creating appropriate conditions for clients' positive socialisation and satisfaction of their personal needs (37,3%); however the majority claimed that they succeeded in doing it only occasionally (57,6%); 20,3% of the respondents stated that they had and 52,2% claimed that they sometimes had to defend the necessity of the position of a social worker against people doubting and disrupting the said activity. The bigger part of the respondents (61%) said that they never violated the norms of ethics; 50,8% of the research participants admitted that they failed to advocate social work in other organisations and the media. The respondents maintained that they did not have (44,1%) or only occasionally had (44,1%) a possibility to freely and openly express their attitude towards the problems of the development of social welfare in the district, city or the Republic personally or via the media. As far as 79,7% of the social workers stated that they failed to create new services of social support, or develop and implement social projects. Besides, 89,8% of the respondents admitted that they did not belong to any association of social workers in their district. Statements prove that a considerable number of problems occur in social work due to the constraints of the activity of

social workers, insufficient possibilities of expression, as well as due to the specialists' poor self-motivation.

The research revealed that the majority of the specialists (78%) did not conceal information about a client or did not provide the demanded assistance despite the order of the manager of the institution. The social workers did not have an opportunity to write formal reports concerning other specialists' indifference to the client's problems (94,9%). The afore-said statements demonstrate that social work is abundant with problems related to the relationships with the management; yet the employed express themselves in accordance with ethics and show their professionalism and principles in their behaviour.

The presented Spearman's correlation coefficients between the statements considering work evaluation and socio-demographic characteristics of the social workers reveal that the correlation in all the cases was not statistically significant ($p > 0,05$), which shows that the statistical significance of the self-evaluation of own work does not depend on the respondents' age, working experience or education.

Evaluation of a social worker's ethical relationships with their colleagues. The research revealed that the social workers agreed with the statements that they respected their colleagues' knowledge and experience (93,2%), objectively evaluated their activity (81,4%), when substituting an ill or absent colleague, accomplished their tasks with the same commitment (81,4%), were tolerant and loyal (78%), help improving their colleagues' authority in the eyes of clients (76,3%), succeeded in fairly fulfilling their commitments to the manager of the institution (71,2%), as well as succeed in timely and fair distribution of material resources among the clients in need (55,9%). 37,3% of the respondents agreed with the statement that they had a possibility to actively express their opinion about the improvement of the activity of their institution, yet a bigger part claimed that they seldom had this opportunity (44,1%).

The respondents showed least agreement with the statement that they showed rightness in regard to their colleagues, told the truth to their face, and criticised for the violation of work discipline (81,4% agreed occasionally); dared to argue with the management if they were convinced that their actions were unfair (71,2% agreed occasionally), or they told their colleagues if they behaved unethically in regard to other colleagues or clients (69,5% agreed occasionally). Hence, it is assumed that despite considering ethics in regard to their colleagues, the respondents did not point out their faults, as well as did not criticise their managers or colleagues.

Spearman's correlation coefficients between the statements regarding colleagues' evaluation and socio-demographic characteristics of the social workers were explored. Having evaluated the statistical significant correlation coefficients ($p < 0,05$):

- 1) Statistically significant differences were determined in the agreement with the statement that the social workers, who had education in social work, succeeded in fairly fulfilling their commitments substituting ill or absent colleagues and helped to raise their authority in the eyes of clients.
- 2) Statistically significant differences were found in the agreement of the respondents, who did not have education in social work, with the statement that they succeeded in defending the credit of their profession and dignity of their clients in the eyes of the society.
- 3) Statistically significant differences were identified in the agreement of the older social workers with the statement that they helped rising the authority of their colleagues in the eyes of clients and showed rightness in regard to their colleagues, as well as criticise them for the violation of work discipline.

Evaluation of the ethical responsibility of a social worker to clients. The research revealed how the social workers evaluated the statements related to the observation of ethics when working with clients. 81,1% of the respondents agreed that they succeeded in concealing personal life and social problems of their clients. The social workers always informed their clients about their professional actions related to their support (67,8% replied 'yes', and 20,3% marked 'sometimes'), always had a possibility to provide their clients with the information about their rights, opportunities and duties (62,7% – yes, and 28,8% – sometimes). The social workers also claimed that in some cases they had to turn to other colleagues for help (33,9% – yes, and 66,1% – sometimes).

However, other statements disclosed greater contradictions among the respondents. The social workers were asked if they felt animosity to people addicted to alcohol and drugs, as well as clients with venereal diseases. 18,6% of the respondents answered negatively, whereas 45,8% answered 'sometimes' and 35,6% admitted feeling animosity. When asked if they could understand every client and help them in solving their problems, the respondents provided the following answers: 33,9% – yes, 47,5% – sometimes, and 18,6% – no. The social workers did not show unity in answering the question if there were any cases when the social worker had to proclaim information about the client's problems for his/her own sake (25,4% – yes, 30,5% – sometimes, and 44,1% – no). The opinion of the social workers about their success in high-minded defence of their client and help to him/her also differed (22% said yes, 49,2% – sometimes, and 28,8% – no). The research data demonstrated that it was rarely possible to convince clients to solve their problems themselves (86,4%); 52,5% felt no animosity to sexual minorities, yet over 40% admitted that they sometimes or always felt hostility to these people.

When asked to agree with the statement that clients had to pay themselves for the services of a social worker since their salary was not big, the majority of the respondents disagreed with the statement (91,5%). 57,6% of the research participants did not feel hostility to refugees and migrants that asked for social support; though 74,6% had to ask for their permission to be filmed, photographed or recorded, and their social problems to be displayed in the press and on television.

Hence, it is concluded that the social workers tend to observe ethics when working with their clients; yet the human factor was obvious when experiencing hostility to homosexuals, migrants and people with addictions. Therefore, due to this hostility, ethical problems may occur when accomplishing professional services. The research revealed that the respondents only occasionally succeeded in involving the clients in the process of solving their problems. This is a typical case in the process of client empowerment.

Having evaluated the statistically significant correlation coefficients ($p < 0,05$):

- 1) Statistically significant differences were established in the agreement of the social workers, who had education in social work, with the statement that they succeeded in concealing the personal life and social problems of a client; they also admitted feeling hostility to people suffering from alcohol and drug abuse, venereal diseases, former prisoners, lesbians and gays, as well as feeling animosity to refugees and migrants that asked for social support.
- 2) The social workers, who did not have education in social work, demonstrated statistically significant agreement with the statements that in some cases they had to terminate their work with a client after having felt that they had tried out every opportunity, and that they had to ask for a client's permission to be filmed, photographed or recorded, and their social problems to be displayed in the press and on television.
- 3) The social workers, who had greater working experience, showed statistically significant

differences in their agreement with the statement that they always informed clients about their professional actions related to the provided support.

The provided data also revealed the distribution of the social workers in terms of moral abuse or violence from clients. The research showed that 83% of the respondents faced pressure from their clients at least once, whereas 9% felt it constantly.

Having evaluated the provided data, it turned out that both the younger and older social workers, as well as the ones with different education and working experience suffered from moral abuse and violence statistically equally ($p > 0,05$).

The social workers were asked to identify whether they managed to cope with their emotions when a client violated their dignity. It appeared that over a half of the respondents managed to control their emotions (53%), whereas 46% could do it only in part.

The research demonstrated statistically significant differences in terms of age: the older social workers could cope with their emotions more successfully than the younger ones ($p < 0,05$); whereas no statistically significant differences were identified between the respondents in terms of education and working experience ($p > 0,05$).

The survey showed that more than a half of the social workers had enough patience to be tolerant and respectful to families of social risk (50,8%), and 48% admitted doing it in part. Having analysed the research data, it appeared that the social workers demonstrated patience statistically equally irrespective of their age, education and working experience ($p > 0,05$).

Qualitative data analysis

The causes of indifferent and irritable behaviour of social workers in their professional activity. During the research, the social workers were asked to express their opinion about the causes of indifference (irritation) in their professional activity. Four categories were distinguished. **Workload** (43 statements). “<...> due to the heavy workload, the provision of services loses its quality: you have to overwork as you are overloaded with paperwork” (Soc58); “When you understand that you are short of time to do everything you should, it makes you nervous. Heavy workload affects your emotional state, you are irritated, angry and anxious. Sometimes you have to do work that is not yours, but can’t object to the manager (Soc57); “The workload is really enormous, you don’t manage to do it. And how much time is spent on paperwork...” (Soc50); **Tension at work** (31 statement). “Daily tension at work <...> impedes concentration, you can’t go into the client’s problem and make a suitable decision” (Soc59); “I think <...> daily tension provokes irritation, peevishness, anger and indifference. Often the clients themselves provoke anger and cynical behaviour” (Soc56); “Undoubtedly, daily tension <...> is reflected in the emotional state. The clients can notice it, as anger and irritation are spread on them” (Soc55); **Emotional exhaustion** (35 statements). “<...> affects the emotional state; you feel irritated, angry and anxious” (Soc57); “Undoubtedly, daily tension, workload and constant communication are reflected in the emotional state. The clients can notice it, as anger and irritation are spread on them” (Soc55); “You feel irritated and indifferent, which my clients obviously notice; therefore, they are angry afterwards” (Soc51); “<...> at first you feel irritated, then indifferent, as you can’t make an appropriate decision on how to solve the problem” (Soc46);

Problematic clients (27 statements). “<...> when you want to help a person, but the expectations do not meet the reality” (Soc43); “When you see no results of your work, you become indifferent and despaired” (Soc40); “clients’ reluctance to change, inability to understand own problems, accusation of the surrounding people and the state, deceit can provoke the indifference of a social worker” (Soc25);

The informants' replies demonstrate that the greatest cause of inappropriate realisation of ethics is heavy workload and extra work (overtime). They resented heavy workload and small salary. The heavy workload prevented them from going into their clients' problems, since they were simply short of time. The social workers noted that tension at work was aroused because of problematic clients, since the research participants had to work with clients of social risk that had addictions, diseases and usually poor education. Heavy workload and problematic clients aroused tension at work, which increased the informants' emotional exhaustion.

Reasons of violating ethics when working with clients

Apathy of colleagues (21 statements). "*<...> when you don't feel support and cooperation from you colleagues*" (Soc59); "*<...> when there is a lack of cooperation in the team and everything is on your shoulders*" (Soc57); "*Everyday tension occurs when there is no cooperation in the team*" (Soc54); **Heavy workload** (38 statements). "*Heavy workload*" (Soc59); "*<...> the workload when you have to complete not only your own work, but also other work dictated by the manager*" (Soc42). **Lack of rooms for work** (14 statements). "*don't have a separate room for working*" (Soc58); "*Inappropriate working conditions, no separate room*" (Soc50). **Problematic clients** (33 statements). "*Physical aggressiveness of clients, undeserved criticism and insults frequently provoke violation of ethics*" (Soc45); "*When drunk clients come. It is very difficult to control myself.*" (Soc40); "*Aggressiveness*" (Soc36); "*Clients' insulting communication with the social worker, usually using obscene words*" (Soc23); "*A client's raised tone, deceit, intoxicated clients*" (Soc18). **Nervous tension at work** (21 statement). "*<...> everyday tension*" (Soc52); "*tiredness, nervous tension*" (Soc26); "*tension, critical situations*" (Soc25).

Main ethical principles when working with clients. The informants were asked to identify the main principles of ethics that should be observed when working with clients. **Respect** (36 statements). "*<...> to respect a person despite his/her being an alcohol or drug addict*" (Soc59); "*<...> respect for a person*" (Soc57); **Confidentiality** (Soc47); "*<...> maintain confidentiality*" (Soc45). **Justice.** (Soc51). **Honesty.** (Soc51); **benevolence**" (Soc55); "**Tolerance**" (Soc53); "*<...> Equal rights.*" **Human dignity.** "*<...> respect every person's dignity*" (Soc47); "*It is most important to respect dignity of every person*" (Soc45); "*<...> empathy*" (Soc13);

Situations when it is essential to observe ethics in social work. The informants were asked when it was important to observe the norms of ethics in social work. The specialists distinguished seven subcategories. **Working with families of social risk** (42 statements). "*When parents don't care for their children, don't buy them clothes, e.g. a child doesn't have a coat or mittens in winter, don't call the doctor when the child is ill, don't buy medicine*" (Soc59); "*<...> child abuse and humiliation*" (Soc58); "*when working with families of social risk, disrespect for a social worker and insults are a frequent case*" (Soc29); **Working with addicted clients** (17 statements). "*<...> when drunk clients come*" (Soc47); "*Working with <...> alcohol addicts*" (Soc2). **Working with abused clients** (16 statements). "*I try to observe ethics in all the situations, but especially in those which are connected with sexual abuse and violence*" (Soc46); "*<...> you have to be aware of them when you solve sensitive problems (e.g. solving problems related to violence in a family, as well as psychological or sexual abuse)*" (Soc15); **Critical situations** (21 statement). "*when a client humiliates you, I remember behaviour norms and tell something good, I try to calm down the client not to provoke his/her further aggression*" (Soc42); "*critical situations*" (Soc40). **Working with disabled people** (42 statements). "*when working with people with disabilities, they start shouting and wave their hands when they fail doing something; working with the families of*

people with disabilities, the parents don't always understand that there are other children not only theirs; every parent wants all attention to their child" (Soc54). **Working with elderly people** (23 statements). "When providing services to the elderly people, it is very difficult to explain the changes in law to them, i.e. it is difficult to explain that the privilege they had yesterday is not valid today because of the changed law" (Soc55); "working with elderly people who have their own convictions and life experience" (Soc51). **Constant observation of ethics** (45 statements). "<...> in all situations, especially when you are humiliated, or when they talk to you in a disrespectful manner" (Soc56); "ethics should be observed in all situations" (Soc46); "I try to observe the norms of ethical behaviour in all situations because I work with people, and if I want to help them I have to behave prudently" (Soc44); "I always keep to the norms of ethics and behave politely" (Soc35); "I always try to observe norms of ethics" (Soc15); "Norms of ethical behaviour should be observed in all situations" (Soc7).

When asked about the situations when they had to observe the norms of professional ethics, the informants mentioned the work with clients that had experienced different kinds of abuse, as well as the work with disabled and elderly people as such work is usually very complicated. However, the greater majority of the research participants claimed that ethics should be observed in everyday professional activity since it is the basis of the professionalism of a social worker.

Summing up the results of the research, it is possible to conclude that social workers knew the norms and principles of professional ethics. As far as the observance of ethics and in social work obligations to the society were concerned, the research participants demonstrated excellent understanding of own duties and responsibilities to the society, as well as applied the norms and principles of ethics outlined in international documents in their practical activity (e.g. justice, confidentiality, etc.). However, the respondents expressed their doubts whether all social workers performed only ethically valid actions and kept to the standards of social work ethics. The obtained data revealed their attitude towards own profession. The research revealed that the social workers faced difficulties in defending own profession and proving of its necessity. The specialists maintained that frequently they were not allowed to express their opinion, participate in developing projects, or publicise their activity in the media. Yet, the majority of the respondents stated that they observed the norms of social work professionalism and ethics and tried to maintain confidentiality about clients. Analysing the ethics of the relationships between the social workers and their colleagues, it was determined that the social workers respected their colleagues, their knowledge and experience, objectively evaluated their activity and helped to solve the incurred problems. Nevertheless, they never criticised their management or colleagues despite fair reasons.

The research highlighted ethical responsibilities of the social workers to their clients and how they were implemented in practice. The respondents rarely managed to involve the clients into the process of solving their problems. Moreover, most social workers felt hostility to homosexuals, migrants and addicted people. Hence, ethical problems could arise in their practical activity due to this animosity. The research also disclosed that all the social workers felt moral pressure from their clients at least once. Only a half of the respondents managed to control their emotions when clients violated their dignity.

Although the respondents indicated a lot of problems that they faced when working with clients, the social workers almost always observed ethics when communicating with persons having social problems. They claimed that they managed to maintain confidentiality about their clients' personal life and social problems. The specialists informed their clients about their professional actions related to rendering support, and always used the opportunity to inform

the clients about their rights, possibilities and duties. The social workers also maintained that they sometimes addressed other specialists for assistance.

The research revealed the causes that raised indifference and irritation in the practical activity of a social worker. The specialists mentioned heavy workload, unpaid extra work and low salary. According to the informants, tension at work also occurred because of problematic clients. The social workers had to work with persons of social risk that had different kinds of addictions, especially alcoholism, and usually poor education. The heavy workload and problematic clients usually aroused tension at work, which intensified emotional exhaustion and violation of ethics of social workers.

The research showed the main reasons that provoked the violation of ethics with clients. The social workers distinguished five main reasons: colleagues' apathy, heavy workload, lack of rooms to work, problematic clients and nervous tension at work. Nevertheless, the majority of the informants maintained that the violations of ethics occurred mostly because of their colleagues' apathy and problematic clients. The social workers were forced to communicate with drunk clients and elderly people. Therefore, they sometimes lost their temper, which resulted in the violation of ethics. The colleagues' apathy aroused a lot of ethical dilemmas: poor communication, unwillingness to help, transfer of duties on the shoulders of the social workers. The informants also indicated that the lack of personal working rooms also aroused great discomfort, since they could not retain confidential information about a client as they had to communicate on public. Heavy workload and nervous tension also added up to the violation of ethics at work.

The research revealed the attitude of the social workers towards the problems of the implementation of ethics in practical activity. The majority of the specialists claimed that ethical norms should always be observed. A part of the social workers mentioned that it was very important to observe professional ethics when working with clients that had experience different kinds of abuse, as well as with disabled and elderly people, since working with them was extremely complicated. Ethical norms should be especially observed when working with families of social risk. The research disclosed that ethical principles were known and especially significant for the social workers. Most often they indicated the principles of confidentiality, respect and human dignity. The principles of equal rights, empathy, tolerance, benevolence, justice and honesty were also mentioned.

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Summary

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The aim is to reveal how ethics are implemented in the activity of social workers. Research methods: Scientific literature analysis; empirical methods – quantitative studies and survey questionnaire. The research results were processed using statistical programme for data analysis SPSS (survey questionnaire) and content analysis (qualitative research).

59 social workers were surveyed in the research, which makes the whole population. Therefore, it is assumed that the reliability of the data is 100%. The research was carried out in February-March, 2016 via the internet platform www.apklausa.lt and included social workers Vilnius District Municipality. 59 social workers participated in the research.

Statistically significant differences were found out in these research areas: the social workers that had no education in social work agreed more frequently that social workers should apply own knowledge and skills in rendering support to persons, groups and communities in solving conflicts between a person and the society; the social workers having education in social work to the statement that social work is incompatible with the direct and indirect support for individuals, political forces or governmental bodies that turn to terrorism, abuse and the like to achieve their goals; in the agreement of younger social workers to the statement that social workers perform only ethically valid acts and observe the standards of international ethics;

Statistically significant differences were determined in the agreement with the statement that social workers, succeeded in fairly fulfilling their commitments substituting ill or absent colleagues and helped to raise their authority in the eyes of clients, in the agreement of the respondents, who did not have education in social work, with the statement that they succeeded in defending the credit of their profession and dignity of their clients in the eyes of the society. The provided data also revealed the distribution of the social workers in terms of moral abuse or violence from clients. The research showed that 83% of the respondents faced pressure from their clients at least once, whereas 9% felt it constantly, half of the respondents managed to control their emotions (53%), whereas 46% could do it only in part.

The survey showed that more than a half of the social workers had enough patience to be tolerant and respectful to families of social risk (50,8%), and 48% admitted doing it in part.

The informants' replies demonstrate that the greatest cause of inappropriate realisation of ethics is heavy workload and extra work. They resented heavy workload and small salary. The heavy workload prevented them from going into their clients' problems, since they were simply short of time. The social workers noted that tension at work was aroused because of problematic clients, since the research participants had to work with clients of social risk that had addictions, diseases and usually poor education. Heavy workload and problematic clients aroused tension at work, which increased the informants' emotional exhaustion.